

**CITY OF ALAMEDA  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

**ADMINISTRATIVE USE PERMIT & DESIGN REVIEW**

**ITEM NO:** 3-A

**APPLICATION NO:** PLN12-0230 – European Auto Repair – 1928 High Street

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:** Use Permit and Design Review approval to add a smog test facility to the existing business. Exterior changes consist of removing one window facing Fernside Blvd and replacing it with a garage door. The service bay is not deep enough to completely enclose the automobiles being serviced; therefore a portion of the cars will remain outside the building. Pursuant to Alameda Municipal Code (AMC) §30-4.8 (c)(6), a Use Permit is required for uses not conducted within an enclosed building.

**GENERAL PLAN:** Neighborhood Business

**ZONING:** C-1, Neighborhood Business District

**ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:** Categorically Exempt from State CEQA Guidelines, Section 15301 – Existing Facilities.

**PROJECT PLANNER:** Laura Ajello, Planner I

**PUBLIC NOTICE:** A notice for this hearing was mailed to property owners and residents within 300 feet of the site, published in local newspapers and posted in public areas near the subject property. Staff received 2 verbal comments opposed to this proposed project. Neighbors voiced concerns regarding noise from the smog test equipment and increased traffic from Oakland. The callers were encouraged to contact the applicant to discuss the project, submit written comments for the Zoning Administrator and attend the meeting. One caller wished to remain anonymous and the other submitted written comments on October 3, 2012. A second letter with similar concerns was submitted on October 4, 2012.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Application
2. Project Plans
4. Notification Map
3. Public comment letters

**RECOMMENDATION:** Find that the project will not cause significant adverse effects to the physical environment, is Categorical Exempt from environmental review and approve the project with conditions based on the following findings:

**USE PERMIT FINDINGS:**

- 1. The location of the proposed use is compatible with other land uses in the general neighborhood area, and the project design and size is architecturally, aesthetically, and operationally harmonious with the community and surrounding development.**

The existing commercial property at 1928 High Street is located at the corner of High Street and Fernside Boulevard. According to City of Alameda business license records, this site has been used for automotive services since 1951. The current operator has owned the business for 17 years and his father ran it before him. The business is closed on Sunday and neighbors describe the business as a good neighbor.

The site is zoned C-1, Neighborhood Business District. The surrounding development is either C-1 or residential and uses include a rest home, the High Street Bridge Center, single, and multi-family dwellings. The addition of smog test service is compatible with the neighborhood because it is intended to serve residential areas with convenient service facilities. The proposed project is limited to one new service bay for smog testing only and will not generate excessive noise or light. Only minor building façade changes are required and consist of converting one window to a roll-up door.

A use permit is required pursuant to AMC §30-4.8 (c)(6) because depending on the size of the vehicle and whether it is front or rear-wheel drive, portions of cars being tested may not fit completely within the enclosed building and this is classified as an outdoor use. Not all cars are tested in this manner, according to the business owner, some newer cars are equipped with sophisticated computer systems and can be tested by simply plugging the car into an on site diagnostics computer.

- 2. The proposed use will be served by adequate transportation and service facilities, including pedestrian, bicycle and transit facilities.**

The site is located at the intersection of two major streets and is served by transit facilities (AC Transit lines W & O). Nonetheless, the use is automotive repair; inherently customers will drive to the site. Off-street parking is available. However, it should be noted that the adjacent parking lot on High Street is part of the rest home located across the street. During a site visit conducted by staff on September 13, 2012 at 11:30 AM, ample street parking was available and the rest home parking lot was not full. Only one (non-conforming) off-street parking space will be removed to provide access to the new smog check service bay. The project is not expected to generate a significant increase in traffic to the site.

- 3. The proposed use, if it complies with all conditions upon which approval is made contingent, will not adversely affect other property in the vicinity and will not have deleterious effects on existing business districts or the local economy.**

Automotive uses have been in operation at this site for 61 years per City of Alameda records. The site formerly included a gasoline station. There is no history of building code violations other than complaints regarding graffiti on the building in 2001. Neighbors that voiced opposition to the project described the business as quiet and a good neighbor but are concerned about increased traffic, noise generated by the smog testing service, and that the use is not permitted per state law.

Staff does not expect the project to result in a substantial intensification of use or create significant impacts to the surrounding properties. State law regulates smog test services and the applicant is solely responsible for obtaining state licensing. Smog test customers are typically served immediately and do not leave their cars at the site. The entire process takes an estimated 30 minutes according to the California Bureau of Automotive Repair. The applicant anticipates that the new service may generate up to 15 customers per day and will require 1 additional employee per shift. Currently there are approximately 3-5 auto repair customers per day. Approval of this project will help an established family-owned business remain competitive and successful.

**4. The proposed use relates favorably to the General Plan.**

The proposed project is in conformance with General Plan goals and policies for this area. The site is located in the East End and is designated as Neighborhood Business under the General Plan. This land use classification is intended to serve residential areas with convenient shopping and service facilities. Allowing an established business to expand its services to remain competitive is consistent with General Plan Guiding Policy 2.5.a, which is to provide enough retail business and services space to enable Alameda to realize its full retail sales potential and provide Alameda residents with the full range of retail business and services.



**Area of Work (faces Fernside Avenue)**



**Subject Site: Formerly a gasoline service station**

## **DESIGN REVIEW FINDINGS:**

**1. The proposed design is consistent with the General Plan, Zoning Ordinance, and the City of Alameda Design Review Manual.**

The project has been reviewed for consistency with City development regulations, policies and design guidelines. The project will replace a window with a metal roll up door to convert a portion of the building used for storage into a service bay for smog test use. The project faces a major public street and will not block views, cause a substantial increase in traffic, noise, light or shading or otherwise adversely affect neighboring properties.

**2. The proposed design is appropriate for the site, is compatible with adjacent or neighboring buildings or surroundings, and promotes harmonious transitions in scale and character in areas between different designated land uses.**

Based on review of project plans and visits to the site, this project has been deemed compatible and harmonious with the design and use of surrounding properties. The roll up door is visually compatible with a building designed for automotive uses (formerly a gasoline service station) and will not otherwise adversely affect neighboring properties. No new driveway curb cuts are proposed and no changes to existing curb cuts are required.

**3. The proposed design of the structure and exterior materials are visually compatible with the surrounding development, and design elements have been incorporated to ensure the compatibility of the structure with the character and uses of adjacent development.**

The subject property is located in a neighborhood commercial zoning district. The site houses a long-standing automotive use in a building designed for use as a gasoline service station with three roll up doors. Design changes consist only of replacing one window with a roll up metal door. No existing landscaping is to be removed to make space for the proposed additional roll up door.

## **CONDITIONS:**

1. The plans submitted for building permit and construction shall be in substantial compliance with plans prepared by Izet Tudzinovic, received on July 15, 2012 and on file in the office of the City of Alameda Community Development Department.
2. Building permit plans shall incorporate each condition of approval. The conditions shall be adequately identified on the plans under a heading titled "CITY OF ALAMEDA, CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL."
3. Operating noise levels of the smog test services shall not exceed noise level standards listed in Section 4-10 of the Alameda Municipal Code.
4. Revocation: This Use Permit and Design Review may be modified or revoked by the Zoning Administrator, pursuant to Alameda Municipal Code Section 30-21.3d should the Zoning Administrator determine that: 1) the use or conditions under which it is being

operated or maintained is detrimental to the public health, welfare or materially injurious to property or improvements in the vicinity; 2) the property is operated or maintained so as to constitute a public nuisance; or 3) the use is operated in violation of the conditions of the Use Permit.

5. All exterior lighting shall be shielded and directed downward and away from property lines to prevent excessive glare beyond the subject property.
6. Vesting: Use Permit and Design Review approval shall expire two (2) years after the date of approval or by **October 16, 2014** unless authorized construction or use of the property has commenced. The applicant may apply for a time extension, not to exceed two (2) years. An extension request will be subject to approval by the Zoning Administrator and must be filed prior to the date of expiration.
7. Indemnification. The Applicant shall defend (with counsel reasonably acceptable to the City), indemnify, and hold harmless the City of Alameda, the Alameda City Planning Board and their respective agents, officers, and employees from any claim, action, or proceeding (including legal costs and attorney's fees) against the City of Alameda, Alameda City Planning Board, and their respective agents, officers, or employees to attack, set aside, void or annul, an approval by the City of Alameda, the Community Development Department, Alameda City Planning Board, the City of or City Council related to this project. The City shall promptly notify the Applicant of any claim, action, or proceeding and the City shall cooperate in such defense. The City may elect, in its sole discretion, to participate in the defense of said claim, action, or proceeding. No judicial proceedings subject to review pursuant to California Code of Civil Procedure Section 1094.5 may be prosecuted more than ninety (90) days following the date of this decision plus extensions authorized by California Code of Civil Procedure Section 1094.6

## **DECISION:**

### Environmental Determination

The Zoning Administrator has determined that this project is Categorically Exempt from environmental review, pursuant to the CEQA Guidelines Section 15301 – Existing Facilities.

### Use Permit

The Zoning Administrator approves the Use Permit and Design Review with conditions.

The decision of the Zoning Administrator shall be final unless appealed to the Planning Board, in writing and within ten (10) days of the decision.

Approved by: \_\_\_\_\_

Andrew Thomas, Zoning Administrator

Date: October 16, 2012

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